Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006

Message Text

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PAGE 01 LISBON 01519 181943Z

64
ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 AF-06 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-03 H-02 INR-07 L-02

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06

EURE-00 OPIC-03 SAJ-01 /067 W
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TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2139
INFO AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMCONSUL LOURENCO MARQUES
AMCONSUL LUANDA
AMEMBASSY MADRID
AMEMBASSY PARIS
USMISSION NATO
DIA WASHDC
USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GER
AMCONSUL OPORTO
AMCONSUL PONTA DELGADA

C O N F I D E N T I A L LISBON 1519

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, MILI, PO
SUBJ: COSTA GOMES SPEECH MARCH 17

REF: FBIS LONDON 172048Z

1. AT SWEARING-IN CEREMONY MARCH 17 FOR NEW REVOLUTIONARY COUNCIL, PRESIDENT COSTA GOMES MADE AN IMPORTANT SPEECH, HIGHLIGHT OF WHICH FOLLOW (FULL TEXT CARRIED REFTEL):

2. INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF AFM INDISPENSABLE:

(A) PRESIDENT SAID THAT INSTITUTIONALIZATION WAS ALREADY ENVISAGED BEFORE MARCH 11 EVENTS, WHICH ACTED AS A CATALYST IN SPEEDING UP AN "INDISPENSABLE" PROCESS;
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PAGE 02 LISBON 01519 181943Z

Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006

Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006

(B) PREVIOUSLY THERE WERE AN "EXCESSIVE NUMBER" OF DECISION-MAKING BODIES; THE COUNCIL OF THE REVOLUTION WILL REPLACE THREE OF THESE--NATIONAL SALVATION JUNTA, THE COUNCIL OF STATE, AND THE SUPERIOR COUNCIL OF THE AFM (COUNCIL OF TWENTY)

(C) THE PACE OF DECISION-MAKING HAS BEEN TOO SLOW GIVEN THE REVOLUTIONARY PROCESS, AND MUCH LEGISLATION WHEN PASSED WAS ALREADY OVERTAKEN BY EVENTS.

3. LAW AND ORDER:

THE PRESIDENT NOTED THAT THERE IS A DIFFERENCE BETWEEN "LIBERTY AND LICENSE", OF MISTAKING ABSENCE OF AUTHORITY AND LEGALITY FOR DEMOCRACY. THE REVOLUTIONARY COUNCIL WILL (A) SEE THAT DEMOCRATIC AUTHORITY IS RESPECTED; AND (B) CURB ANY EXTREMISM.

4. TOO MANY POLITICAL PARTIES:
THE PORTUGUESE PEOPLE, SAID THE PRESIDENT, "ARE NOT POLITICALLY ENLIGHTENED ENOUGH TO REJECT ELITIST OR PSEUDO-REVOLUTIONARY PARTIES. IT IS THUS NECESSARY TO HAVE A DECISIVE AND DETERMINED SOURCE OF POWER WHICH, IF SO REQUIRED, WILL CLEANESE AN EXCESSIVELY BROAD PARTY POLITICAL SPECTRUM."

5. GENERAL ASSEMBLY:
GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE ARMED FORCES MOVEMENT "WILL REPRESENT IN PROGRESSIVE TERMS THE TRUE FEELINGS OF THE ENTIRE ARMED FORCES, FROM GENERALS TO PRIVATES."

6. CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS:
"WE SHALL HOLD FREE ELECTIONS WHICH WILL PRODUCE A CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY WHICH WILL BE A SOURCE OF ELUCIDATION AS TO THE PEOPOLE'S GENUINE WILL."

7. COMMENT: PRES. COSTA GOMES HAS BEEN IN STICKY SITUATION SINCE MAR 11 COUP ATTEMPT. ALTHOUGH HE HIMSELF, AS THE OCCUPANT OF THE CHAIR SPINOLA WISHED TO REGAIN, WAS A LIKELY TARGET OF THE ABORTIVE COUP, HE WAS ALSO KNOWN AS POLITICAL MODERATE AND QUIET BACKER, IF NOT BEHIND THE SCENES STRATEGIST, FOR THE MODERATE OFFICERS OPPOSED TO THE RADICALS IN THE AFM.

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8. BY HIS CAREFULLY BALANCED SPEECH COSTA GOMES SEEMS TO HAVE SOLIDIFIED HIS SHAKY POSITION. ONCE AGAIN HE HAS CAREFULLY STRADDLED THE PUBLIC FENCE. ON THE ONE HAND HE REPEATED THE BARELY DISGUISED THREATS AGAINST THE MRPP AND PDC (PARA 3 AND 4). ON THE OTHER HAND HE CONFIRMED THAT FREE ELECTIONS WILL BE HELD AND THAT THEY WOULD EXPRESS THE PEOPLE'S WILL (PARA 5).

Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006

Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006

9. COSTA GOMES (PARA 5) REPEATED AGAIN AN EARLIER MENTION OF THE RESTRUCTURING OF THE AFM ASSEMBLY OF DELEGATES (ASSEMBLY OF 200) IN ORDER TO INCLUDE ENLISTED MEN AS WELL AS OFFICERS. THE EFFECTS OF THIS ARE HARD TO PREDICT, AS WE DO NOT YET KNOW WHAT THE PRESIDENT MENAT WHEN HE SAID "WE SHALL CREATE" SUCH AN ASSEMBLY. IT IS NOT CLEAR WHETHER IT WILL BE ELECTED BY THE AFM OR WHETHER ITS MEMBERSHIP WILL BE DESIGNATED IN SOME WAY. SINCE THE AFM DOES NOT TECHNICALLY INCLUDE ENLISTED PERSONNEL AT THIS TIME, THE ODDS SEEM TO FAVOR SOME SORT OF DESIGNATION PROCEDURES. THIS WOULD VERY LIKELY RESULT IN A LEFTWARD SHIFT IN AN ASSEMBLY WHICH WAS GENERALLY BELIEVED TO HAVE A MODERATE SILENT MAJORITY.

10. IN LAUDING THE REVOLUTIONARY COUNCIL AND THE SUDDEN INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF THE AFM, COSTA GOMES IS RIDING THE TIGER WHICH EVENTS HAVE FORCED HIM TO MOUNT: THE QUESTION IS WHETHER COSTA GOMES CAN GET THE TIGHER UNDER CONTROL AS HE SEEMED TO BE DOING BEFORE THE MARCH 11 FIASCO. COSTA GOMES IS SMART, POLITICALLY SENSITIVE, AND PATIENT. NEVERTHELESS, HE IS FACED WITH AN ENORMOUS, IF NOT INSURMOUNTABLE TASK.

11. SWEARING IN OF COUNCIL WAS SHOWN ON NATIONAL TV. ALL OFFICERS APPEARED IN UNIFORM, INCLUDING PM VASCO GON CALVES, WHO HAS ALMOST ALWAYS WORN MUFTI SINCE APRIL 25. PORTUGUESE PEOPLE THUS GIVEN CLEAR PICTURE OF WHO IS IN CHARGE.
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